1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



not see?' or 'do you not hear?' and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or even death.[1]

Occasionally temples dedicated to Bhagavati or Bhadrakāḷi were under the control of Tantri Brahmins in South Canara. The latter had the right to appoint the priest and oracle to each of these temples: the priest was a Brahmin while the oracle belonged to any high caste like Coorgs.

The Tantri Brahmins knew the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple and consecration of images. They visited the temples under their management once every few years when their Coorg followers made money-offerings to them. Moegling tells us that a single such visit would yield the priests between Rs 200 and Rs 300, a substantial sum in those days, and which testifies to the hold exercised by the Tantri Brahmins over Coorgs.[2]

The fact that the Tantris sanctioned the institution of oracles at their temples shows the extent to which they had compromised with non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation:

> Some Coorg is also chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a large number of candidates prese ted by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some *mantra* and puts some holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.[3]

The Kaṇiyas are another caste with whom Coorgs come into intimate contact in ritual contexts. They are astrologers and magicians from Malabar who have settled in Coorg for a long time, and their hold on Coorgs was very much greater in the past than it is today.

Every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment, or it will fail. Only the Kaṇiya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology. The first ploughing of the rice-fields, the first sowing, and the cutting of the sheaves have all to be performed during auspicious periods. A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day and at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually

[1] *Coorg Memoirs*, pp. 56–57.
[2] Op. cit., pp. 56–57.
[3] Moegling, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



compatible. But not all Coorgs have horoscopes, and marriages are frequently arranged without resorting to the Kaṇiya astrologer.

Coorgs formerly resorted to the Kaṇiya on every conceivable occasion. If an ox strayed, or if someone was ill in the house, the Kaniya was consulted. It was believed that he was able to tell, by consulting the planets, whether the strayed ox would return and whether the patient would recover. Sometimes he suggested the performance of some rite which would enable, for instance, the ox which had strayed to return home and the patient to recover. Perhaps a minor deity or spirit like Guḷika, or an ancestral spirit, was annoyed because it had not received the necessary attention from the members of the particular joint family. The Kaṇiya would then suggest the performance of appropriate propitiatory ritual.

The Baṇṇa and Paṇika are two low castes, originally from Malabar, who are very similar to each other and who actually perform the ritual which the Kaṇiya prescribes for his Coorg client. These two castes stand in a relation similar to the one in which the dispensing chemist stands to the doctor in the Western world. The Kaṇiya says, for instance, that the ancestors of his client are angry because they have not been propitiated for a long time, and he suggests the performance of the *kāraṇava téré* which is an elaborate propitiation of ancestors lasting over a day. The Baṇṇa (or Paṇika) actually performs the elaborate ancestor-propitiation at which the ancestors of the Coorg joint family possess the Baṇṇa oracle.[1]

Each Baṇṇa family serves a group of villages which they are under an obligation to serve. Besides ancestor-propitiation and other occasions when their services are wanted by families, Baṇṇas play very important parts at the festivals of village-deities where they are oracles, dancers, and cutters of the sacrificial animals.

Coorgs come into contact with the blacksmith, carpenter, and goldsmith usually in non-ritual contexts. The blacksmith and carpenter make the agricultural implements and domestic articles, and also help in building the massive houses of Coorgs. Some of the articles made by them, like the bier and palanquin, are used on ritual occasions.

The goldsmith, in addition to making the gold and silver orna-

[1] Richter's *Manual of Coorg*, pp. 169–70, contains an example of the kind of service which the Kaṇiya performed with the aid of the Baṇṇa.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



is considered in this chapter while the non-*mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.'[1] (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.'[2] (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'[3]

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala*' as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

## II

The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*. It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit *mūhurta*, which means a 'particular division of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.[4]

The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned, and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

[1] *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd edition), p. 235.
[2] Ibid., p. 2.
[3] *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.
[4] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 825.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as inclusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspiciousness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *panchānga* which may be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Panchāngas* are nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a Coorg house to have a *panchānga*. It is frequently referred to as it gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur, and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes, and they are all mentioned in the *panchānga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to the whole of India.

## IV

*Mangala* has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins, Okkaligas, and Gauḍas may enter all parts of the ancestral house. Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washermen (Maḍivāḷa), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, however, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



widows and divorcées have a slightly higher status than widows, but this does not entitle them to be classed as *garatis*.

The Coorg widow's dress consists of a white cotton *sari*, a white cotton blouse, and a white cotton scarf. *None* of these clothes may have a coloured border. The corpse of a widow, too, is dressed in clothes without a coloured border. The corpse of a married woman, on the other hand, is dressed in a coloured *sari* with a coloured, or silver, or gold, border.

The distinction between a widow and married woman is absolutely fundamental in every part of south India. Married women have a great number of privileges, whereas widows have a great number of ritual disabilities. A married woman is auspicious, she is everywhere welcome, whereas a widow is inauspicious, and she is unwelcome everywhere. This deep cleavage expresses itself in the matter of dress also.

## IX

After being dressed in ritual robes, the subject of *mangala* salutes the various lamps in the house before sitting down for *mūrta*. On either side of him is a dish-lamp placed on a tripod stool. The dish-lamp is indispensable on every ritual occasion.

Every day, early in the morning and again just before nightfall, the housewife sweeps the house and sprinkles it with a purifying solution of cow-dung. She then lights the wall-lamp and salutes it. While saluting it she prays to the ancestors of the *okka*, to Mother Kāvēri and Shiva. Every member of the *okka* salutes the wall-lamp after getting up in the morning, and again at night.

The ending of night as well as of day is marked by sweeping and purifying the house, and by lighting and saluting the wall-lamp. The period between the ending of the day and the beginning of night is regarded as a critical time, and children are not given food or allowed to sleep at that time. This is a common south Indian custom.

It is regarded as a bad omen if the lamp goes out while a Coorg is having his dinner. The sudden extinction of the lamp indicates the approach of disaster. The diner gets up from his meal, cleans the dish and washes his hands. He sits down to dinner again a few minutes later. This makes it a different meal altogether and not the one that was interrupted.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



with a condition of ritual purity. It is obvious that in the above instances physical dirt has been identified with ritual impurity. Purification consists in taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. Dirt, then, is seen as ritual impurity, and cleanliness as ritual purity. It is necessary, however, to stress that they are ritual and not natural states.

Birth and death both result in ritual impurity for the entire household for several days. This ritual impurity will not disappear even if the impure person has a dozen baths a day. But, once the prescribed period is over, the individual attains his normal ritual status after a bath. It is necessary to stress that ritual purity is fundamentally different from cleanliness, though they overlap frequently. A simple association of ritual purity with cleanliness, and ritual impurity with dirtiness, would be a neat arrangement, but it would falsify the facts. One comes across ritually pure robes which are very dirty, and snow-white clothes which are ritually impure.

A corpse is ritually impure and contact with it results in pollution. The crow, which is a scavenger bird, and is everywhere associated with death, is also impure. The spirits of dead ancestors assume the forms of crows on certain ritual occasions when they are propitiated. The conclusion of funeral rites is marked everywhere by the offer of balls of rice to the dead man's spirit. These balls are kept either on the roof of the house or on the ground at some distance from the house. If the crows fall to these balls soon, it is believed that the dead man is satisfied. Delay in the arrival of the crows indicates that the dead man is dissatisfied.

If the crows perch on a roof and caw, the death of someone under that roof is presaged. A man who sees two crows mating will die soon after unless he sends a false message announcing his death to his kinsmen. Nowadays it is not unusual for a person who has seen two crows mating to send a telegram announcing his death to his kinsmen.[1] The mating of crows means their increase, and the man who sees it is likely to die. The way he can counteract this is by announcing his death as soon as he has seen the crows mate. The ends of justice are met by such an announcement.

If a crow's droppings fall on a person, he or she will have to dip in a tank or river a thousand times. This is extremely inconvenient,

[1] Needless to say, this causes the unfortunate kinsfolk a considerable amount of worry and suffering.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



769 782 on the image of the deity are given to a worshipper, he or she sticks them in his hair, or keeps them in his pockets. When such flowers wither, they are either put in a well or pond or on a tree. They are not thrown where people are likely to tread on them.

[796] Quite apart from festivals and other occasions when the dishes cooked in the house are offered to the ancestors before the members themselves partake of them, there are special occasions when the ancestors have to be offered food and drink, and these occasions are the last days (*changrāndi*) of the months of Taurus and Cancer, and the tenth of Libra.

The propitiation of ancestors with food (invariably non-vegetarian) and liquor and lights is called *kāraṇava bhāraṇi*. There is also a more elaborate propitiation of ancestors called *kāraṇava téré* or *kāraṇava kōla*, at which Baṇṇas or Paṇikas officiate as priests and oracles.

This elaborate propitiation of ancestors is prevalent everywhere except Kiggaṭnāḍ. Also there is no uniform rule as to when the propitiation should be performed: each *okka* seems to follow a different rule in this matter. For instance, the Mātanḍra *okka* perform it annually in May, while the Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform it once every few years, while some other *okkas* perform it before a wedding in the house and still others perform it some time after the death of an elderly male. In the last case the object of the propitiation is to convert the spirit of the dead person into a *kāraṇava*. An old saw has it, 'The eleventh should be added to the group of ten'.

The propitiation is invariably performed at the ancestral house. The latter is whitewashed, colour-washed, and the floors washed with a solution of cow-dung. Nowadays the head of that branch of the *okka* which is resident in the ancestral house writes a letter to the heads of the branches living elsewhere, and to other relatives, informing them of the date of the propitiation. On the appointed day they all gather together at the ancestral house, bringing with [785] them their votive offerings of fowl or pig or both. A daughter of the house who has married out might bring with her a votive animal to a *kāraṇava* of her natal *okka*.

The propitiation begins after sundown. Everyone takes a bath, and the head of the house dresses himself in a waist-cloth and 769 shoulder-cloth. If he is very pious he even observes a fast.

702 The Baṇṇas perform the propitiatory ritual in the central hall of ● 787 the ancestral house. One of the Baṇṇas acts as oracle (*tiruvaḷkāra*

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



or *boiḷchapāḍ*) while another, or two others, beat drums and sing the house song of the propitiating *okka*. The song gives us an account of the life of each ancestor and ancestress. The oracle wears an elaborate equipment called *téré* which consists of two bamboo frames covered with red cloths. One of the two frames covers the lower part of the oracle's body, and the other, the upper part. The lower part is really like a skirt, while the upper part, which is flat and tapers towards the top, is tied to the back by means of a stout cord going round the waist. The *téré* is decorated with tufts and frills of the pith of *pāmbaḷé*.

The Baṇṇa oracle mimics the ancestor who has possessed him. If the ancestor possessing him had a game leg, the oracle limps about, and when an ancestress is possessing him he ties a scarf round his head in the way a woman ties it.

The possession has the quality of drama. Sometimes a certain incident which occurred in the past is restaged during the possession. For instance, *A* of *X okka* was in the service of one of the Rājas, and he was put to death by the Rāja's order. It is alleged that this was due to the machinations of *B* of *Y okka*. Now, when an ancestor-propitiation is performed at *X okka*, the Baṇṇa oracle who is possessed by *A* shouts, 'I was betrayed by *B* of *Y*. I have descendants to proclaim my name. *B* of *Y* has none.' The *okka Y* was about to become extinct through the absence of male heirs when a girl of the *okka Y* was married in the *okka parijé* fashion to a boy of *okka Z*. *Okka Y* no doubt continues to exist today, but through the descendants of a female member and not through an unbroken line of agnatic kindred. Agnatic continuity has more prestige than continuity otherwise achieved. Of course, continuity, however achieved, is better than cessation.[1]

*A* of *X* was induced to enter the Rāja's service by his father, who was a renowned magician feared by all on the Wynāḍ side of Taṇḍra river. At the ancestor-propitiation mentioned above, the Baṇṇa possessed by the son (*A* of *X*) accuses the Baṇṇa possessed by the father of being the real cause of the former's death, for, but for the father's pressure, the son would no thave entered the service of the Rāja. 'Father' and 'son' start fighting with swords, and blood is

[1] This incident makes it clear that a grave offence against the ethical code results in the ending of the offender's *okka*. It is surprising to note, especially in view of the existence of special customary devices like *okka parijé* and *makka parijé*, that continuity through a female descendant may be regarded as ineffective.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



drawn. The descendants of the *X okka* who are looking on intervene and stop the fight.

Sometimes the oracle, possessed by a particular ancestor, inquires into the state of the ancestral estate. He asks the members of the *okka* to take him to the paddy-fields, and he might even sharply criticize them for not paying sufficient attention to the ancestral estate. He might inquire after the welfare of the members of the *okka*. It is said that sometimes these oracles point out treasure troves.

The living members ask the oracle questions concerning the various matters affecting them. 'Will my child recover from illness?' 'Why is a son not born to me?' And so on.

Before a particular ancestor leaves him, the oracle goes to the ancestor-shrine, where one of his party sacrifices a fowl or pig. Liquor, parched rice, coconut, and plantains are all offered to the ancestor represented by the oracle. The latter eats the parched rice and drinks the liquor, after which the ancestor who is possessing him leaves him. He gets ready to impersonate the next ancestor named by the head of the *okka*.

The last ancestor to possess the oracle is the Founder, in whose honour the oracle wears the upper part of his *téré* equipment. A pig is usually sacrificed to the Founder. The head of the *okka* requests the Founder to bless the descendants.

On the next morning the sacrificed animals are cooked and the entire village is invited to dinner. Thus an ancestor-propitiation is also an occasion for the expression of the solidarity of the village.

The Baṇṇas get as their perquisites the heads of the animals sacrificed, provisions, some cooked meat, and also a little cash. This is in addition to the fixed amount of paddy they are paid annually at harvest. The Baṇṇas in a village serve the Coorg *okkas* in that village or *nāḍ* during ancestor-propitiations and other occasions when their services are required, and in return for this they receive a certain amount of paddy annually. The relationship between a Baṇṇa family and a Coorg *okka* has a certain continuity and members of the former are well acquainted with the history of the latter. The Baṇṇa family almost becomes the repository of the traditions and history of the Coorg *okkas* it serves.

The Baṇṇa oracle is identified with the ancestor who is possessing him, and his acts and words are considered to be the ancestor's acts and words. In fact, an oracle is always identified with the

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



ancestor or deity whose mouthpiece he is believed to be. But unbelievers are quite common among Coorgs, and an old man of sixty-five had not seen a single ancestor-propitiation, which he described as 'nonsense imported from Malabar'.[1] A sub-inspector of police considered both ancestor-propitiation and the worship of village-deities to be 'superstition'. Several educated Coorgs have told me they do not believe in ancestors and village-deities. The worship of fierce deities with pigs and arrack does not find favour with many, both Sanskritic and Western influences being opposed to it. Such opposition to propitiation of ancestors and village-deities frequently goes with a preference for Vēdānta of a kind. But still one comes across elders like Kuṭṭayya who tell you, 'they (the people) continue to disbelieve in ancestors till they get a knock on the head'. Repeated failure or illness makes a man go back to his old beliefs. Sometimes the Kaṇiya astrologer who is consulted says that the trouble is due to the failure to propitiate ancestors.

Sometimes a man or woman is possessed by an ancestor or ancestress, and while possessed, he or she might demand merely an offering of meat and liquor, or a full-fledged ancestor-propitiation with oracles, sacrifice of animals, &c. A person is identified with the spirit or deity possessing him, and consequently the demands of the person possessed by an ancestor are treated as the demands of the ancestor who is possessing him.

The offer of meat and liquor to ancestors as well as the elaborate ancestor-propitiation are non-Brahminical and non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation involving the offering of non-vegetarian food and liquor. Also no Brahmin priests are present and no Sanskrit *mantras* are chanted. The non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation of ancestors contrast with the Sanskritic which consists in the offer of *piṇḍa*, or balls of rice or rice-flour, under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

Amma Coorgs, the highly Brahminized section of Coorgs, do not make offerings of curried meat and liquor to their ancestors. Instead, on a certain day in the year they offer balls of rice to the ancestors, and this resembles the annual propitiation of ancestors with purely vegetarian offerings and Sanskrit *mantras*, which prevails among Brahmins and other high castes all over India.

Both the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation

[1] This particular person was very irreligious. He had not even gone on pilgrimage to the source of the Kāvēri.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity Subramaṇya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subramaṇya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya, some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly found in south India.

The identification of cobras with Subramaṇya demonstrates the way in which Sanskritic Hinduism operates. The worship of cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya provides a door for the entry of Sanskritic Hinduism. People who until then had only been worshipping cobras came to know about Subramaṇya, the son of Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramaṇya's birth, which is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to other gods like Vishṇu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya became popular, and these shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskritic Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskritic Hinduism.

Stones representing Pūda and Guḷika are frequently found in the compound of a Coorg's house. Pūda is the Tamil corruption of the Sanskritic *bhūta*, which means a spirit. Pūda is frequently one of the deities in a village temple.

Guḷika in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He is also referred to as Māndi.

Guḷika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see Guḷika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and Coorg show the position of Guḷika, and this is said to indicate when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take place in a Coorg's house it is customary to plant a stone called Mrityu Guḷika (death Guḷika). This is believed to put an end to the deaths.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



621 Baṇṇas and Maléyas are in demand in surrounding villages, but
796 they manage to fulfil all their ritual engagements. Similarly,
535 Paṇikas from the village Biḷigunda officiate at the festival of
791 Kundat Bhadrakāḷi. These Paṇikas too are very busy people, serving as they do a number of villages. But the people of Kuklūr have ensured their services by giving them, in the past, an advance (*iḍu*) of Rs50 and two gold bangles. This is paid in addition to the customary fees paid after every festival. The payment of the advance guarantees the Paṇika's attendance and service at the festival. It is clear that the Paṇika or Baṇṇa or Maléya can only fulfil his engagements if the festivals do not clash with each other. The Baṇṇa is essential at the festival of a village-deity, and it is perhaps his list of engagements which ensures co-operation between the villages he serves.

796 The saying 'kētrappang pātradoḍané', meaning 'the entire pot
776 of toddy for Kētrappa', testifies to the deity Kētrappa's great liking
273 for toddy. Part of the ritual of the festival of Kētrappa consists in fetching toddy from the Kopaṭṭi hills, about seven miles from Bēngūr. The Kuḍiyas (a tribe) in the Kopaṭṭi hills tap the toddy, and the festival-priests go to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day of the festival carrying new earthen pots (*kaléyas*) filled with paddy, which is the perquisite of the Kuḍiyas. These pots are brought back on the sixteenth day, and toddy is offered to Kētrappa and other deities in Bēngūr on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days. The Kuḍiyas visit the Kētrappa temple on the eighteenth day to offer their homage to the deity, watch the ritual, and receive a share of meat and toddy.

Every priestly (*kāvukāra*) *okka* in Bēngūr sends at least one representative to the Kopaṭṭi hills on the seventh day. They all leave the village at about 4 a.m., after taking a bath in cold water and donning ritually pure robes. They are in a condition of purity and other villagers may not look at them till they have crossed the boundary of the village. Both when they go to deposit the pots and to bring back the pots full with toddy some esoteric ritual takes
● [787] place in the Kopaṭṭi hills. The festival-priests are very secretive about it, but I learn that all the ritual centres round the possession of a Kuḍiya oracle by Ayyappa, a deity of the Kuḍiyas in the Kopaṭṭi hills.

796 The festival necessarily implies co-operation between Bēngūr people and a hill tribe living in inaccessible hills covered with

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



horizontal ties and this has to be balanced by stressing vertical ties periodically.

In the case of the Brahmin the dishes prepared for offering to the deity also become gifts to people who normally contribute to the upkeep of the temple and its priest. The Brahmin and Poleya, though they stand at either extreme of the social scale, are similar in this, that they are normally receivers of goods at the hands of Coorgs and others. During the festival they make token returns which, while negligible economically, are enough to stress the goodwill prevalent between the various sections of a village community.[1]

The tenth day, the festival day, is the most important day of the festival Visitors come from surrounding villages to witness the ritual that is performed on this day at the temple. A ritual fast is observed till about 10 p.m., and adult villagers subsist till then on pancakes and *pāyasa*.

The morning is devoted to making preparations for the rites in the evening, and for cooking. Some time in the afternoon the villagers go in procession to the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The procession is led by Poleya oracles who walk with their faces to the Bhadrakāḷi oracle and the crowd. Pack-bullocks carrying votive offerings of rice (*ettu pōraṭa*) form part of the procession.

The Poleya oracles stop outside the temple, before the wooden platform on which an image and representations of their deities are placed. The villagers go into the temple driving their pack-bullocks before them and walk round the Bhadrakāḷi shrine thrice. They then dance the torch dance in the temple yard, holding yak-tail whisks or swords in their hands.

Drummers belonging to the Mārāya caste beat big drums called *chandés* while the Brahmin priests worship Bhadrakāḷi inside the shrine using Sanskrit *mantras*. Devotees, Coorgs as well as others, who pay the requisite fees, can have worship performed by the priest to the deity in their names.

Meanwhile, the Bhadrakāḷi oracle stands behind the shrine and people put questions to him on matters concerning their welfare: one wants to know whether his wife will recover from an illness, another why he has suffered from a series of misfortunes in the last

[1] They are alike in that both are excluded from the activities of the middle castes. Extreme purity excludes the Brahmin while extreme impurity excludes the Untouchable.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



few years, a third man whether he should go ahead with a business or other venture he has been contemplating for some time, and so on. (He answers questions again that night.)

Outside the temple compound Poleya oracles are possessed by their deities. They run about possessed, and their possession comes to an end when the possession of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle comes to an end. While possessed, the Poleya oracles may be called upon to exorcise evil spirits from people.

After the possession stops, devotees make offerings of money (*kāṇiké*) to the deity.[1] Miniature silver representations of a human being, of any part of the body, and of a cradle are made by those who had vowed to make such offerings on recovery from an illness, or recovery of the normal use of an organ, or the birth of a child, respectively.[2]

The afternoon concludes with the Brahmin priests' offering to the devotees parched rice sweetened with jaggery and coffee. The villagers then disperse.

## V

At about 9 p.m. the people of Kuklūr and sightseers from other villages gather together at the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanḍa *okka*. Mēdas and Poleyas play on their drums and pipes, and Coorg men and boys dance to their music. Four villagers beat the big drum (*dōḷu*), singing the drum song which is about Bhadrakāḷi. Votive animals, to be offered to Bhadrakāḷi, are all assembled here before being driven to the temple. In 1941 there were twenty-three sheep, three goats, and fifty fowls. This was exclusive of one 'village goat' (*ūrāḍu*) and two 'village fowls' (*ūru kōḷi*) which are subscribed for by the entire village.[3]

With a brass mask of Bhadrakāḷi as nucleus, a Paṇika builds a circular *téré*—a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of the *pāmbaḷé* plant. This *téré* is leaned against two pegs and then the Paṇika worships it. He kills a chicken and cooks it in

[1] Collections are also made on the ninth and eleventh days. The expenses of the festival are met out of the money raised at the collections. Rs110 was collected on the tenth day.

[2] This custom prevails all over south India.

[3] It is known that formerly between 300–400 animals were annually sacrificed to Bhadrakāḷi. The number has fallen off very greatly now. A very small section of Coorg opinion would like to do away with animal sacrifice altogether.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



the immense fire that is burning several yards from the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*. The chicken and a little toddy are offered to the *téré* representing Bhadrakāḷi.

The Paṇika dancer gets ready for his performance which begins an hour later. He wears tiny bells (*gaggaras*) round his ankles, paints his face red and yellow, wears a turban, and ties an elaborate red skirt round his waist. He stands there waiting for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive and give him permission to place the circular *téré* on his head. The *téré* is kept flat on the head and held by one hand while the Paṇika dances and sings a song in praise of Bhadrakāḷi.

Three Poleyas, oracles of deities worshipped only by Poleyas, also wait for the Bhadrakāḷi oracle to arrive. The latter rushes into the Nandiyaṇḍa threshing-yard, stamps on the roaring fire with bare feet, and then touches the Bhadrakāḷi *téré*, signifying that the Paṇika may now place it on his head. He then rushes to the temple, where he starts dancing a very vigorous dance before the shrine of Bhadrakāḷi.

A change is noticeable in the Poleya oracles as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle rushes in. The deities of the Poleyas are regarded as subservient to, and dependent upon, Bhadrakāḷi, who is the deity of the higher castes. And the oracles, who are Poleyas of the deities of the Poleyas, are also regarded as inferior to, dependent upon, the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi, who is a Coorg. Thus the structural distance between Coorgs and Poleyas expresses itself in every sphere.

Two Poleya oracles run to and fro, with swords in their hands, while the third, the oracle of the deity Pūda, writhes on the ground and groans, while the Bhadrakāḷi oracle is stamping on the fire with bare feet. He stops groaning and writhing as soon as the Bhadrakāḷi oracle leaves the threshing-yard.

The villagers place the *téré* on the Paṇika's head. The latter starts singing a song in Maylayāḷam in honour of Bhadrakāḷi. The entire body of villagers, headed by the Poleya oracles marching with their faces to the crowd, then run to the temple. The Poleyas stop outside the temple while the others go in. The votive sheep also may not go in, and they remain outside the temple. They are later sacrificed outside the temple.

The villagers go into the temple and walk round the shrine thrice. The village goat heads the procession inside the temple.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



Once the third round is completed, the Paṇika dances before the shrine. The villagers let off fireworks, the Mārāyas beat drums, and there is general tumult and shouting.

The Bhadrakāḷi oracle executes a vigorous dance for about forty-five minutes before the shrine. After the dance is over he selects two swords out of a number offered by the Brahmin priest and then proceeds to the roofed platform at the entrance to the temple, where he declares how many of the votive animals may be sacrificed to the Poleya deities. Then he proceeds to place one sword on his head and hit it with the other. Soon his head is covered entirely with blood. The Poleya oracles gash themselves following the Bhadrakāḷi oracle. The latter then proceeds to the veranda of the shrine, where he gashes himself more. This gashing is called *narāhuti* (human sacrifice). After the oracle has stopped gashing himself he answers questions. He orders the Paṇika to cease dancing and remove the *tére*. The Brahmin priest then offers him consecrated water which he drinks. The priest begs the oracle, identified with Bhadrakāḷi, to pardon the lapses which might have occurred through ignorance and to leave the village without inflicting any harm. The oracle orders those present to conduct the festival properly, and then the possession ceases.

The oracle is completely identified with the deity supposed to be possessing him. Even the Brahmin priest believed that the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi was really the deity herself. It was temporarily forgotten that he was a Coorg by caste. There was a look of fear on the priest's face when he was requesting the deity (the oracle) to leave the village without harming anyone. But though the oracle is identified with Bhadrakāḷi, he does not enter the innermost room where Bhadrakāḷi's image is kept. That is to say, the implications of the identification of the oracle with Bhadrakāḷi are not fully worked out. Only the priest may go into the innermost room, and this rule is not relaxed in favour of the oracle who is temporarily identified with Bhadrakāḷi.

After the Bhadrakāḷi oracle returns to his normal condition, the priest shuts the door of the shrine and goes home. Women, children, and a good many spectators also leave. Only the festival-priests and other functionaries remain, along with those who have brought the votive animals, to witness the decapitation that follows. The Paṇika, whose duty it is to sacrifice the animals brought by devotees, makes a small incision in the little finger of his left hand

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



## VII

791 The Bhadrakāḷi oracle plays a most important and, to the out-
798 sider, rather puzzling role in the festival. He directs the festival at every stage and these directions are given while he is believed to be possessed by the deity whose oracle he is.

It should be remembered here that the tasks which each *okka* has to perform in the festival and the contributions it is required to make are all determined by custom. The oracle rarely sets aside or countermands these tasks and contributions, and he does so only when there are good reasons: for instance, if the sole adult male representative of one of the concerned *okkas* is seriously ill during the festival the oracle will ask another *okka* to take over the duties of the sick man.

Sometimes the oracle is given the discretionary power to act with some latitude. For instance, he is required to allot some of the votive animals brought by the upper-caste devotees to the deities of the Poleyas. In 1941, when I witnessed the festival, he did not allot any goat to the Poleya deities as only three goats had been brought as offerings. The Poleya deities had to rest content with a few sheep and fowls.

The oracle also decides which day of the festival should be the fast-day or *paṭṇi*. He usually chooses the eighth day, but if it is unsuitable for some reason or other, he chooses an earlier or later day.

[787] The point to note is that all these instructions are issued while the oracle is believed to be possessed by the deity. The oracle's words are regarded as the deity's words. Coorgs commonly talk about 'the deity said this', and 'the deity did that', and it is only after a while that the outsider understands that they are referring to the oracle's acts and words. The oracle no doubt issues instructions while possessed, but these instructions only restate, confirm, and support what has already been decided by custom. The oracle exercises his discretionary power only in certain known and definite contexts..

The villagers know every step of the Bhadrakāḷi oracle beforehand. They tell you that 'he will be running in a minute', or that 'he will be gashing his head', and so on. It is like a play which they have seen before and you have not.

Shri Tātaṇḍra Kāryappa is the oracle of Bhadrakāḷi and unlike

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



*nāḍs* under a chief called Nāyaka, who was usually at feud with other similar chiefs. For some time even after the country had been effectively brought under the control of the Lingāyaṭs Rājas, feuds between *nāḍs* continued to occur.

The play of Kungu which is enacted in the south-western parts of Coorg during the harvest festival gives us a picture of Coorg in the days when inter-*nāḍ* feuds were common. *Maradalé* (feud) was prevalent between Beppunāḍ and Kadiyetnāḍ, and it was so bitter that there was no intermarriage between them. They conducted raids on each other constantly. In one of these raids an arrow from a Beppunāḍ man lodged itself in the body of a Kaḍiyetnāḍ man. The injured fighter was carried by his friends to Chendappanḍa Kungu, a famous doctor in Eḍenālknāḍ. Kungu agreed to treat the injured man because Eḍenālknāḍ and Kaḍiyetnāḍ were friendly to each other. But Kungu's mother was born in Beppunāḍ and she persuaded her son to neglect the injured man, who belonged to a *nāḍ* which was the traditional enemy of her natal *nāḍ*. The injured man died as a result of Kungu's neglect.

It was common for deities to be identified with their *nāḍs*. Temples were always chosen for attack. The story of Chengeṭṭira Appaṇṇa stealing the wooden pins belonging to the see-saw of the Bēngūr Povvedi temple has already been narrated. The most successful way of rousing the wrath of a *nāḍ* or village was by attacking one of its temples.

A patriot was also a devotee. The story of Kaiyandira Appayya brings out this point clearly. Appayya, a mere boy, whose earboring *mangala* had not yet been performed, was cut to the quick when he learnt that the well-known fighter, Kullachenḍa Chōndu, had tried to prevent the offer of worship at the temple of Chōli Povvedi in Arapaṭ village in Kaḍiyetnāḍ. Appayya persuaded the elders of Kaḍiyetnāḍ to permit him to fight Chōndu, whom he killed by resorting to unfair means. Appayya's action, instead of meeting with disapproval, earned him great rewards. *Mangala* ceremony was performed for him, and a number of privileges were conferred on him by a grateful *nāḍ*. These privileges later became hereditary in the Kaiyandira *okka*.

When a hero was born in a hostile *nāḍ*, all the people in the *nāḍ* suffered from headache. The tower of its most important temple was damaged, guns hanging from the roof fired of their own accord, babies sleeping in cradles suddenly woke up, frightened, and so on.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of Kāṭakēri, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted on perjurors.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life have been responsible for undermining the authority of the headmen.

## XI

Formerly, two or three neighbouring *nāḍs* came together occasionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong contains an appeal (*éyi koḍ*) to an assembly of the elders of two *nāḍs* from an assembly of the elders of a single *nāḍ*. Another folksong refers to the elders of three *nāḍs* meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest festival requires the co-operation of several *nāḍs*. The ritual cutting of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival, and this has to be performed during a particular period on a particular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the Pāḍi Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assembled headmen of Pāḍinālknāḍ of his decision. This is later conveyed to every *nāḍ*, village, and *okka*.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kaḍiyetnāḍ people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the decision of the astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi. The acceptance produced uniformity in very many *nāḍs*. Such ritual uniformity provides common values and makes possible the integration of several *nāḍs* into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the barriers between *nāḍ* and *nāḍ*, and between caste and caste.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



The entire rice-field (*varga*) is cut up into a number of small rectangular plots ridged up on all the four sides. Each plot (*tēva*) is referred to by a distinct name, and one of these plots is regarded as the main plot and it has the same name as the entire rice-field. The traditional association between an *okka* and its ancestral estate is symbolized in the custom of burying the umbilical cord of the eldest son of the head of the *okka* in the main plot of the ancestral estate. The eldest son is the one who is going to become the head of the *okka* in course of time, and as head of the *okka* he will have to look after the ancestral rice-field. The main plot stands for the entire rice-field, and it is entirely proper that the umbilical cord of the future head of the *okka* should be buried in the main plot. It may be recalled, in this connexion, that during the periodical ancestor-propitiation, the Baṇṇa oracle, possessed by an ancestor, may demand to be shown round the rice-field in order to see for himself whether it is looked after properly. Thus a Coorg continues to take an interest in the affairs of his *okka* even after his death, which means that he continues to care for the rice-field on which the prosperity and happiness of the *okka* and thus, indirectly, of the total society depends.

Every stage of the cultivation of the rice crop is marked by ritual. The main plot of the ancestral rice-field is ritually ploughed on the first of Aries, the beginning of the new year according to the solar calendar. Either the head of the *okka*, or a younger member who is considered to be specially suitable by the astrologer, ritually ploughs the main plot during an auspicious period of time. Regular ploughing of the rice-fields commences only after the ritual ploughing on New Year's Day.

Paddy is sown in the nurseries at an auspicious period of time. When the plants are 10–12 inches high, they are transferred to the various plots in the rice-fields. The plucking of the young plants and their transplantation are both begun during auspicious periods. The transplantation of the young plants is a highly complicated task requiring the co-ordination of the work of a number of people. It is especially so if the estate is a big one.

The Kāvēri festival includes a rite called *bottu* (lit., fear) and this is intended to protect the growing crop, the woods on the estate, and the domestic well.

One of the most important calendar festivals of Coorgs is the *putri* (lit., new rice) when the paddy sheaves are ritually cut.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



243 788 This latter rite is the crucial point of the festival which lasts nine to ten days, the seven days previous to the sheaf-cutting being spent in singing, dancing, and playing games. On the day following the cutting of sheaves there is a domestic feast, a dance, and sports for all the villagers. This is followed by a dance for the entire *nāḍ*, and a collective hunt and dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*).

243 787 The rite of cutting the sheaves takes place on the full-moon day in the month of Scorpio under either of the constellations, *krittiké* or *rōhiṇi*. Formerly the hereditary astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi in Nālknāḍ used to decide the day and time for the ritual cutting of sheaves for the whole of Coorg Proper excluding Kiggaṭnāḍ. The local astrologer then decided for each high caste *okka* in his village the member who was most suitable for performing the rite of cutting the sheaves. The member selected for this honour had to wear the white gown.

243 788 On the festival day, very early in the morning, various leaves and creepers are gathered for the rite of *néré kaṭṭuvudu*. The trees and creepers most common locally are chosen for this purpose, and they frequently vary from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*. They seem to symbolize the principle of fertility in vegetable nature. A wish for growth is also indicated in another rite, and such a wish is commonly indicated in harvest festivals in south India.

A part of the kitchen floor is cleaned with a solution of cow dung and a new mat is spread on it. A tripod-stool is made to stand on the mat, and a dish-lamp is placed on the stool. A harvest-basket containing the leaves, and short lengths of creepers, is kept near the dish-lamp. Later, at an auspicious time, a leaf of each variety is taken, arranged one upon the other, a short length of *inyoḷi* creeper crowning the pile of leaves. The leaves are then rolled round the creeper and the roll is secured with a length of *achchi* fibre. A number of such rolls are made.

A harvest-basket is filled with paddy and this is placed on the mat near the dish-lamp. Two measures and a small pot, filled with paddy, rice, and rice-flour respectively, are arranged one upon the other on the paddy in the basket. The new bamboo vessel (*kutti*) which the Mēda brought in the morning is stood near the basket on the mat. A little milk, honey, and *ghī* are poured into the vessel. Bits of coconut, fresh ginger, and green rattan cane, and a small quantity of gingelly grains are also put into it. Finally, the new sickle which the blacksmith brought is left in it.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

The Kaṇiya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspicious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree. He also decides when the village or *nāḍ* should have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

The branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport. An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandalwood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons.[1] The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

[1] A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5



are performed at the nellaki. After this formal arrangement of the marriage neither party may withdraw from their agreement.

As soon afterwards as all the preparations have been made, a variable period but seldom more than a month or two later, the wedding takes place. The Coorg season for weddings is between the end of the paddy-harvest and the breaking of the S.-W. monsoon, i.e. during the months of April and May. In ancient times any other period was inconvenient and even with the advent of transportation by motorbus and automobile no change has taken place. The day for the marriage is frequently fixed nowadays by an astrologer (kaṇiĕ), and the song gives ample recognition to this, though in this it may reflect the conditions of the last few centuries rather than of more ancient times. The ceremonies take place at the houses of the bride and bridegroom respectively. Ideally these should be the traditional central houses of the respective sibs (called aynumane). In very many cases however these houses are most inaccessible and perhaps not even occupied, and in such cases the actual dwelling-houses of the families are the scene of the ceremonies.

The wedding ceremonies are now to be described. On the first day each of the two persons to be married goes through the mu:rta ceremony in the house of his or her family. It is essentially a ceremony in which the person is blessed and prosperity and fertility are ensured by the sprinkling of rice on the person and feeding him or her with milk by the members of his or her father's and mother's sibs. Early on the following morning the bridegroom arrives at the bride's house. Rice is again sprinkled and milk fed, to the bridegroom by members of the bride's father's sib, to the bride by members of the bridegroom's father's sib. Then follows the sammanda ceremony, by which the bride is made a member of her husband's sib. This is the essential ceremony of the marriage. The bride is then conducted from her house, being stopped as she leaves by her male cross-cousin, and is brought to her husband's house. There she performs the ceremony of carrying water into the house, as an earnest of the household duties that she will perform as a wife in this house. On that night the marriage is consummated. Details of the various ceremonies now follow.

On the first day of the wedding two separate but identical ceremonies called mu:rta are held, one at the bride's house the other at the bridegroom's. To each all the members of the respective sib and of the original sib of the mother of the central figure of the ceremony and all the members of the village sibs are invited. Preparations for the affair, cooking, cleaning and the like, have previously been made by the members of the house assisted by the closest or even by all of the sib-members. The bridegroom bathes on this morning in the bath-house; seven married women, who are not widows, from among his relatives, e.g. his sisters, his mother's and father's sisters, his uncles'

## Marriage Customs and Ceremonies

The marriage customs of the Coorgs are a curious medley of old and new rites, fashions and notions. Formerly, their marriage customs had a communal character. On an auspicious day, a family would call together the whole village, comprising all the families of the rice valleys occupying farm houses, for a feast. The youths would have their ears pierced by the village carpenters to wear ear-rings, and the maidens had rice strewn over their heads. This was called the marriage feast. The whole community feasted together and the younger people were at liberty to go in search of husbands and wives. This communal character has now changed. Young men express their desire to marry to their parents, grandparents, or the senior members of the family, who look out for suitable girls not in any way related to them. All consanguinous unions are prohibited. Among the prohibitions are:

(i) The descendants of the father's side of the same family name.

(ii) The descendants of the mother's sisters.

(iii) Paternal or maternal uncles or aunts.

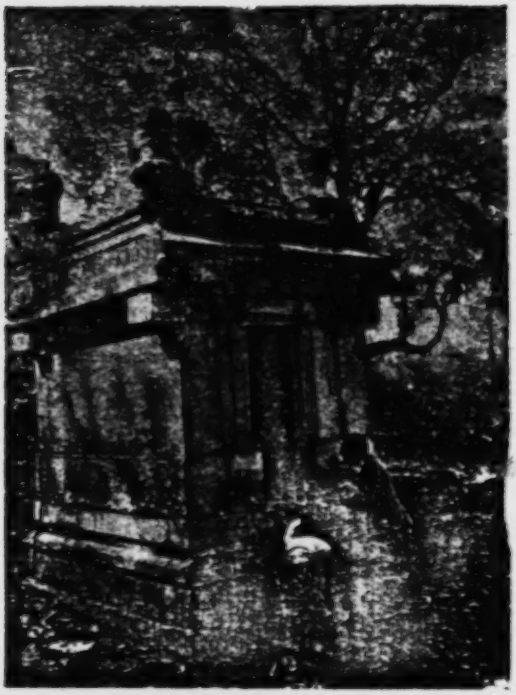
A friend of each of the contracting parties becomes the intermediary or Aruva and he is the master of the ceremonies. The father of the young man or his elder brother with the Aruva goes to the house of the young woman, where their advent is expected. On a favourable response, the whole house is well swept and cleaned, and a lamp is lit, when the Aruvas on both sides with prominent members of respectable families stand before it, facing each other, and shake hands in token of the inviolable contract having been concluded. Such betrothals are seldom broken. If the bridegroom dies before consummation of the marriage, the bride becomes a widow. She is then entitled to an inheritance and sustenance in the bridegroom's family, and may enter into conjugal relations with his brother or first cousins.

The Coorg weddings generally take place in April and May, when the rice fields are dry and there is little to do. The day for the wedding is fixed in consultation with the local astrologer, and invitations are sent by the Aruvas to the relations of the bride and bridegroom, to the married Coorgs of the same village, to friendly neighbours of other castes, or even to Muhammadans.

On the wedding day at about 9 a.m. the invited guests assemble in festive array at the houses of the bride and bridegroom, and while the women go to the inside of the house and give a helping hand to the mistress, the men are accommodated in the spacious verandah or in temporary sheds in the courtyard and served with pansupari to assist the flow of village

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

346



A Coorg Temple (Kaymada)

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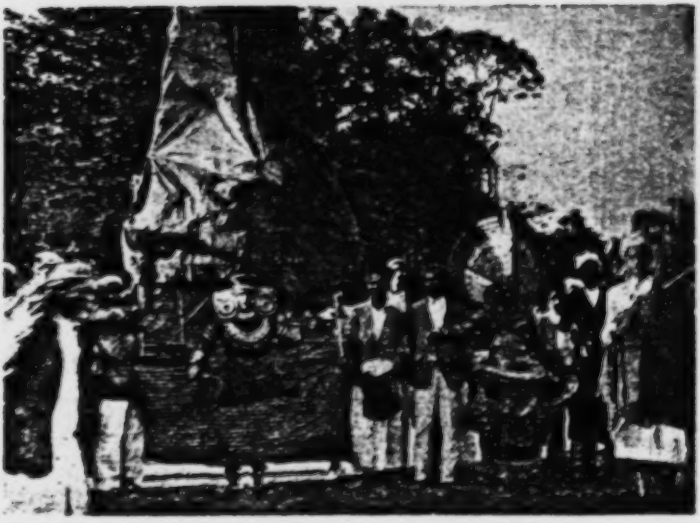

A Ghost Mask (Karnakola)

[facing p. 51]

[P 51]

## CHAPTER IX

## COORG (Contd.)

THE worship of the demons and ancestor-spirits constitutes the religion of the Coorgs. They have been influenced by contact with the Malayali, Canarese, Brahmanical and Lingayat superstitions. The Malayalis have made themselves indispensable at their demon and ancestor worship. The Tulus are their Pujaris. The worship of Mariamman (the smallpox demon) was introduced by the Mysoreans. The domiciled Brahmans of Coorg have succeeded in the introduction of Mahadeva and Subrahmania, and have temples erected and idols set up for worship. The Lingayats or Sivachars are also endeavouring to introduce the worship of Linga. Since the days of Vira Rajendra, Christianity was introduced in Coorg, and there is a Roman Catholic Settlement with a fine church at Virajpet, but Christianity has not made much headway in Coorg. 771 776 777 [797]

### Ancestor-Worship

The ancestor-worship of the Coorgs is based on the belief that the spirits of the dead hover inside and outside the Coorg dwellings and cause endless trouble in the absence of adequate propitiation. Each Coorg house has a *Kaimatta* (a building close at hand) under a tree in the fields or in the yard close to the house. This is a raised mud platform where carved stones representing the images of their ancestors are placed. Sacrifices of fowls and pigs are made to them. Sometimes the Coorgs become possessed of the spirits of the dead and express all their desires when they are sumptuously fed and given drink. The spirits of ancestors are believed to hand over their locality and become angry now and then. A male ghost is called *Karana*, and a female one *Sodalachi* or *Karanchi*. 769 [346] [782] [787]

It is a belief among the Coorgs that ghosts cause trouble, and females even more so. The Sodalachis are ever inclined to smite children with sickness and sometimes even the adult males and females of the house. In fact they are ever inclined to do harm. With a view to appease their wrath, rice, arrack, milk and other delicacies are offered on various occasions during the year to them. Once a month, a fowl or two are offered at the *Kaimatta* to please them. In such cases a member of the community becomes possessed. He then puts off his head dress and walks in front of the house in a state of trance. While in this condition, the members of the family appear before him to represent their grievances. He makes some incoherent utterances which are believed to be emanations from one of the ancestors who has not been propitiated with offerings. At once he is treated to meat and drink, and neighbours are allowed to come in and put questions to the possessed. These gifts are called *Karana Baruna*. 769 782 787

796 The Coorgs perform another ceremony called ghost-mask (*karanakola*)
769 with the object of finding out the particular wishes of the ghosts. It is
●787 performed every second or third year and occasionally also every year. For this, the services of a Malayali performer, a Panikkan or Benna, are requisitioned. At night he puts on, one after the other, five or more different costumes to represent the number of ancestors especially remembered at the
[534] time. Arrayed in these different costumes, he dances to the accompaniment of a drum beaten by his companions and behaves as if he were possessed by
[782] the Coorg ghosts. After each kola or mask, he leaves the house with a fowl, a coconut, fried rice and other eatables, and some arrack, and offers them in the courtyard to a particular ghost. Various questions are put to him by the members of the family and by the neighbours while he is in a state of trance. The food given him during the trance is called *Karana Barani*. The masks having been finished, a pin especially fattened for the purpose is decapitated in front of the *Kaimatta* and then taken up to be given to the performer. The rest of the carcase and bodies of the fowls
[782] decapitated are taken to the house. In the absence of a *Kaimatta*, the pig offering takes place at the *Karanakotta*. Women also behave likewise, when possessed by an ancestral spirit. While thus affected, they roll on the ground, but they do not give utterance to oracular responses. Some-
[785] times sorcerers, Coorgs or aliens, are invited to exorcise the ghosts. With the recitations of certain formulae in loud voice, they resort to flagellation. If it proves ineffectual, offerings are given.

### Village Gods

776 Tradition has it that human sacrifices were offered in former times to
782 secure the blessings of Grama Devatas, Mariamma, Durga, and Bhadrakali, who are supposed to protect the villages or nads from all evil influences. These deities have their annual feasts among the Coorgs, but they pay special attention to Ajappa, Kaliat Ajappa, and Kuttamma in Kiggatnad, whose shrine is annually visited with gifts.

Every forest ground has its presiding deity to which an annual sacrifice or pork and cakes is offered. If it is not propitiated, the *Kadevaru*, the tending god, will withdraw his favour, and sickness and death among cattle will ensue. Besides, there are extensive forests called Devarukadu, which are untrodden by human foot and reserved for the abodes or hunting grounds of deified heroic ancestors.

### Serpent Worship

77
825 Traces of serpent worship or tree worship are found in Coorg. The *Natas* or spots on which cobras have finished their course of terrestrial life are the place of solemn ceremonies. To prevent any human being from setting foot on the hallowed spot, it is marked by a little stone enclosure.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5



During the month of November, a lamp is lighted every evening to Natas, and coconuts are offered as oblations.

## Pilgrimage

The Coorgs go on pilgrimage to Irjatre at the foot of Lakshmana-tirtha fall in Kittatnad after the Sivaratri in February or March, and on the Talai Kaveri Jatra to the source of the river Cauvery in October. Amongst the Jatra beyond their country, those visited by the Coorgs are four, Subramania on the northern frontier of Coorg in December, Baitur in Malabar, in February, and Nanjangudu in Mysore which comes off in December. In exceptional cases they go to Benares.

## Demon Worship

The Coorgs are demon worshippers because of the evil influences of certain malignant spirits, which can render their life more gloomy and wretched. The demons are called Kulis, who are believed to be capable of carrying away the souls of the dying members in a family. When any trouble arises in a house, and strange voices are believed to be heard in or near it, a *Kanya* (a Malabar astrologer) is consulted as to the cause of it, and he speaks of the influence of some *Kuli* who must have carried away the soul of somebody either in the house or in the neighbourhood. He suggests that a demon mask has to be performed for the liberation of the soul. It takes place once a year at Kutta, or at any other place once in two or three years.

The master of the house ties some money in a piece of cloth which is suspended from a rafter of the house as a pledge for the performance of the ceremony. Sometimes he ties his brass plate up there and eats his food on a plantain leaf as a vow. For the demon mask, either a Malayali magician or a true Ajjala Palya is sent for, and the ceremony is performed in the courtyard of the house owner. Demon masks are performed in the name of one or two of the five demons, Bhamundi, Kallugutti, Panjurli, Gulika and Goraka. The details of the ceremony are the same as those described for the exorcism of the ancestral spirits. The food of the performer in trance is called Kuli Barani. The liberation of the soul is thus effected. The demon that has thus committed the theft begs to leave the soul free. In the event of his refusal, the performer throws a handful of rice on the member of the house standing near him, and thus transfers the spirit to him. The spirit alights on his back, when he falls in a swoon, and is soon carried away by others into the house. The final act of a demon mark is the decapitation of pigs in front of the so called *kuzhikots* or demon abode. It may be near to or far away from the house or village. Fowls are sacrificed upon it. One pig suffices for house affair, but several pigs are required when a whole village is involved. The heads are given to the performers, and the trunks supply the house or village diviner.

**Festivals: (1) Huttari**

243 746 527 The Huttari is the feast of first fruits. The name is said to be derived from the Malayalam 'pudiyari', or new rice. It occurs at full moon at the end of November or beginning of December. After various preliminary ceremonies, the person chosen to cut the first sheaves goes at sunset to the fields in procession with a lighted torch in a dish of rice [415] carried before him. He has a sickle in one hand and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. He cuts the sheaf and distributes the stalk to those present, and puts some into the milk. This is carried in procession to the [534] house, the people shouting, "Poli, poli, Deva", that is, "Increase, increase, O God," followed by a blast of the shrill Coorg brass horn. It is truly a national and thanksgiving feast entirely uninfluenced by Brahmanism. It [535] lasts for seven days. It begins with village rejoicings and extends to Nad [533] or district gatherings, and ends every day with the peculiar cane dance of [526] the men and boys to the tune of the most melancholy and monotonous sound of horns, drums and songs. Other games vary the proceedings, but the most interesting part is always the champion fight in playful dance, which often ends in a general skirmish in which the canes are freely used.

**(2) Kaylmurtha**

527 The Kaylmurtha is the festival of arms celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg sometime in August. When the hard labours of ploughing, sowing, and transplanting of rice are over, a break in the monsoon spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and [781] dales, forests and fields in Coorg, when a holiday is most welcome. The Takka of the grama calls some respectable men to accompany him to the astrologer's home. They ascertain the most propitious day for the celebration of the festival.

[411] On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is placed in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When this is done, they are carried to a room or central hall, where they are [782] placed in a corner. When the auspicious moment arrives incense is burnt before the weapons, sandal paste is dotted on them in profusion, and a show offering, *Nivedya*, is offered to them and the idols. As soon as the [526] festival is over, the whole house sits down to dinner. The men then proceed with their arms to the village green, *uru-mandu*, to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark and in athletic sports. The following day is devoted to a hunt in the forest belonging to the village. This is followed by a great hunt of the whole Nadu. It is a repetition of the village hunt on a larger scale. Whatever game is obtained, the man who killed the [533] animal receives a hind quarter and the head. The rest goes to the company. The Kaylmurtha is the most glorious of all festivities to the young Coorgs,

Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AWS Coorg AWS



and the popular song of the Coorg mountaineer does full justice to this sentiment.

### (3) Bhagavathi Feast

The Bhagavathi feast has been introduced by the Tulu Brahmins. It takes place two months preceding the monsoon. It is connected with demoniacal possessions, and extends over nine days. Tantri Brahmins, Coorgs and Holeyas have their share in the feast, and votaries disport themselves in their orgies in as noisy a manner as the Ajjala Palyas. The chief object of the feast is the collection of votive offerings to Tantri Brahmins who are an object of dread to the Coorgs.

### (4) Devasthans

The Coorg Devasthanas are rude village shrines of mud walls and thatched roof within a gloomy grove. The only ones deserving notice are those at Bhagamandala, Palur, Irupu and Omkareswara Devasthana at Mercara, the latter of which is built in the same Moorish style as the Rajas' tombs.

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professed patronage of the Brahmans and that they gradually dropped into brahmanical habits of life and thought. A good many now wear the holy thread, and all profess to abstain from meat and fermented liquors. The return to Brahman initiation and dress was brought about by a Haviga Brahman whose family exercised spiritual influence over the Amma Kodagas. They are still unlettered. There is a tradition current among them that in former times one half of Coorg belonged to the Ammas, and the rest to the Coorgs. The Ammas by virtue of their priesthood held their land free of rent. Their lands are even now very lightly taxed.

101 793 [212] [173] [651]

### Internal Structure

The Amma Coorgs form a homogeneous community. There are two gotras among them, the Baradwaja gotra and Viswamitra gotra. They marry within the same gotra.

621 [582]

### Marriage Customs and Ceremonies

The Amma Coorgs do not intermarry with the Coorgs, but the separation may be of recent origin. Marriage settlement is made only after the agreement of horoscopes. The young man's father, uncle, and other close relations assemble, when coconuts, plantains, and betel leaves are handed to the bride in token of settlement. The auspicious day for celebration is fixed to send invitations to the relatives on both sides. The dress and ornaments to be given to the bride are also settled. The preliminary formalities that are gone through are :—

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1. The boy's party going to the house of the bride.
2. Their welcome with refreshments.
3. Nischithambulam.

The essential formalities are *mukadarsana*, and garlanding and *panigrahana*, tali-tying, presenting the bride with the wedding dress and ornaments, and feasting. There is no *homam* as among the Coorgs, but there exists the cutting of plantains in common with the Coorgs. On the arrival of the bride at the bridegroom's house, she puts rice on the lamp. On the third day they bathe, and celebrate the *sobhanaprasta*, if the girl has attained puberty already.

### Pregnancy and Childbirth

When a girl becomes pregnant, *pumsavana* and *simantha* are performed. When she is about to become a mother, she is confined to a separate room. Her mother or some aged woman acts as midwife. Pollution lasts for eleven days after which she bathes to become pure. But it is only after 40 days that ganga puja is performed, when she bathes and becomes pure. Only then can she enter the kitchen. Cradling the baby takes place on the eleventh day. The naming ceremony takes place the same day.

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4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



The present marriage rites of Coorg, especially in Kiggatnádu, where bride and bridegroom are welcomed together by the relatives and fellow-villagers of both parties, and sit together on the wedding-chair, closely resemble the common fashion of the Hindus, though they have not yet conformed altogether. 585 [191]

Young persons under sixteen years of age are not married in Coorg. Exceptions from this wholesome rule are very rare. It is to be hoped that the Coorgs will ever be preserved from the misery of child-marriages. 582

A young Coorg, when about to marry, has first to obtain the consent of his father or of the head of the family. This affair being settled, the Aruva of the house is taken into the marriage-council. He has to speak to the Aruva of the family, to whom the desired bride belongs. These Aruvas hold an important office among the Coorgs. They act as representatives, counsels, guardians of families and individuals on the great occasions of life. A particular friend of a neighbouring Coorg house becomes its Aruva, and a member of this house is naturally the Aruva of the other. On a certain day the Aruva of the intending bridegroom, accompained by his father or elder brother, goes to the house of the young woman, who is to be asked in marriage. They speak to the Aruva and to the head of the house. A favourable answer being returned, the whole house is carefully swept and a lamp is lit. Some families, affecting new fashions, at this time call in the astrologers to see whether the stars of the new couple will agree together or not. Where no horoscope has been taken, the astrologers, never at a loss, find the stars by the names of the parties! It is to be supposed, that the wise seers generally return acceptable answers. However, this part of the marriage-proceedings is evidently an innovation. The old fashion is to light a lamp in the newly swept house; when the two Aruvas, with the heads of the respective families, stand before 584 624 584 178 [787]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



584 [178] it, (the bridegroom's Aruva and father, or elder brother, on one side, the bride's representatives on the other) and shake hands together, in token of an inviolable contract having been concluded, in the presence of the Divinity or sacred light of the house. Such engagements are rarely, if ever, broken. After the above preliminaries the time for the wedding is agreed upon. The nuptials are often postponed half a year, sometimes for a twelve-month, but generally the Coorg weddings come off during the months of April and May, when the rice-valleys are dry, and there is little work to be done. [187] When the time approaches, the astrologer's counsel is asked for the choice of a propitious day. The relatives of the bride and the bridegroom are invited to the respective houses ten days before the wedding. Under the superintendence of the Aruvas they engage in the necessary preparations. The members of the respective families themselves are not expected to join in these labours. On the last day before the marriage all the families of the villages of the bride and bridegroom are summoned. Each house must send at least one male and one female representative. Now the wedding-sheds are finished; pigs are slaughtered and dressed; rice and vegetables are prepared. The whole company thus working together, join also in a good dinner provided for their guests by the principal parties interested. The Aruva of each house acts throughout as master of the ceremonies.

585 574 On the wedding day, at sun-rise, the two village communities, to which the bride and bridegroom belong, are in festive commotion. No house is permitted to absent itself from the general gathering. In the bridegroom's house the male guests, in the bride's house the female attendants, busy themselves with bathing, dressing and ornamenting the chief personage of the day, and in making every thing ready for a good Coorg-feast. The larger and fatter the pigs, the more abundant and strong the liquor, the greater will be the glory of

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



Náráyana" and the echo is taken up by succeeding caravans. Near the summit there is an overhanging rock, called Bíma-kallu, which forms a sheltering abode for some fakirs during the festive season. The source of the river is enclosed by a stone basin, over which a small shrine of granite slabs is built. From this reservoir the pure water percolates into a tank of about 30 feet square, which by an outlet keeps the water to a level of 2½ feet. On two sides there are rough stone terraces scooped out of the hill side and above the third terrace on a dip of the hill there is a small square temple dedicated to Ganapati with a few huts close by for the abode of the residing Brahmin-pújáris.

At the moment, fixed by the Astrologer, of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra, whether by day or by night, the pilgrim, who is anxious to experience the full power of the sin cleansing bath, must descend into the holy tank. With the approach of the hour an ever increasing multitude surrounds the tank, impatiently waiting for the propitious moment. Now the priest gives the sign and the living throng, old and young, men and women rush in wild confusion into the water, duck three times and drink as often of the water, and, on emerging, offer a small gift to the priests, who sit near the shrine, receive the money and pour some pure water over the devotee's head. Before leaving, most of the pilgrims fill a hollow reed (Wóte) with water from the sacred spring and carry it home for the benefit of their relatives, and for purifying their wells. The effectual bathing season lasts for a whole month but with decreasing virtue. From 8 to 15,000 pilgrims may annually visit Tala-Kávéri, but the interest in the place seems to be on the decrease. The presiding Brahmins have secured some jungle for coffee cultivation in the neighbourhood of the temple, and the Coorgs complain, that the priests take greater care of their coffee gardens than of

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



"If I killed this pattern of righteousness, my sins could never be forgiven," he says to himself. He declares to the cow, that she may return in safety to her calf and her herd, takes a desperate leap high into the air, and falls down dead before the good cow. This is the Coorg lay of the cow, consisting of one hundred and odd verses.

**b. The Huttari-feast.**

The Huttari-feast is held in honor of the annual rice-harvest. The name is derived from the Malayálam Pudi-ari, new rice, and by the rules of Coorg grammar transformed into Huttari. The festival occurs in the month of Scorpio which succeeds Libra. The day of the Coorg-festival depends upon the day fixed by the Malayálam Astrologers for the celebration of the New-rice-festival in the month of Leo. The Malayálam festival takes place two months before that of Coorg, because the rice on the coast ripens two months earlier. If the Malayálam festival of the First-fruits fall upon the first day of the Simha-mása, that of Coorg is held on the first day of Vrishchika-mása; if the Malayálam festival be on the second day of that month, the Coorg holidays commence on the second day of this month, and so on. (Simha-mása corresponds to our September—October, Vrishchika-mása to our November—December.)

The Huttari is the great national festival of the Coorgs and of the Holeyas. It is a heathenish Christmas season, a sort of Saturnalia. The real holidays are only seven in number, but both Coorgs and Holeyas, who stand in an ancient and intimate relation to each other, generally add two or three more days of feasting and merry-making to the great week. On this occasion, as well as on the great Kávéri-day, Brahmins are in no way wanted. Nor could they well officiate in a Coorg kitchen on the Kávéri-day, or preside over the pork-and-brandy-feasts in the merry days of Huttari.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AWS Coorg AWS



formance. The Huttari takes place on the full moon. Early in the morning before dawn, a quantity of Ashvatha (ficus religiosa), Kumbali and Keku (wild trees) leaves, some hundred of each for great houses, together with a piece of a creeper, called Inyoli, and some fibrous bark called Achchi, are collected and deposited in a shady place for the use of the evening. During the day, the house is cleansed, brass vessels are scoured, and every thing wears the appearance of a great holiday. Beggars come and are dismissed with presents. The Méda brings the Huttari basket, the potter the little Huttari pot, the blacksmith a new sickle, the carpenter a new spoon, the Holeya a new mat. Each carries off his Huttari portion of rice and plantains. The astrologer follows, to communicate the exact time of the full moon, and claims his share of the Huttari bounty. The cattle are washed and scrubbed, for once; the menial servants have an extra allowance of rice; breakfast and dinner are served to the family. At sunset the whole house prepares for a hot bath. The precedence is given to the person whom the astrologer has chosen in the morning for the ceremony of cutting the first sheaves. On his return from bathing, he repairs to the threshing floor, spreads the Huttari mat, and, while the rest are engaged in their ablutions, cuts the Inyoli creeper into small pieces, rolls each piece into an Ashvatha, a Kumbali and a Keku leaf, in the fashion of a native cherroot, and ties up the little bundle with a bit of Achchi fibre. All the bundles are placed in the Huttari basket. Now the women take a large dish, strew it with rice, and place a lighted lamp in it. This done, the whole household march towards the fields; the dish with the lamp is carried in front; the sheaf-cutter follows with basket and sickle in one hand, and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. Arrived at the chosen spot, the young man binds one of the leaf scrolls from his basket to a bush of rice, and pours milk into it. He cuts

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



796 Some Coorg also is chosen as a subject for possession by
793 Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be insti-
787 tuted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a small number of candidates presented by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some mantra and puts holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.

346 Every house of the villages, connected with a temple, must
793 pay an assessment in rice every year to the Brahmans em-
794 ployed, and money must be offered by every family, from 3 as. to one rupee, on the last day of the annual festival.

796 The Bhagavati-feast lasts nine days. During the first six
793 days, every morning and evening, the idol is carried three times round the temple in procession, while the Tantri-curate, who is the chief authority in the place, performs púja, strewing rice and minced leaves of Calyptanthes Caryophyllifolia, mixed together, on the stones placed towards the eight regions
[786] of the heavens, and mumbling his mantras. One of the Tulu
[787] Brahmans carries the idol on his head; he is accompanied by the Pújári and the other officers of the shrine, followed by the band of Padárthis, playing the drum, cymbal and gong, and preceded by the Coorg-man performing a frantic dance in the ecstasy of demoniac possession. Many people come on these occasions to put questions to Bhagavati in behalf of sick persons, or for the discovery of thieves, etc. which are duly answered by the Coorg spokesman of the goddess.

796 On the evening of the sixth day things take a more ex-
786 cited aspect. Now the Brahman idol-carrier also is seized
[793] with the strange inspiration. He dances and trembles, and answers questions by making signs only. On the same afternoon a crowd of Holeyas, who have finished the Pannangalamma-feast (a corresponding Holeya festival) come to the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



open space before the temple, many of them possessed by devils of their own, which belong to the host of Pannangalamma, all of them jumping and dancing and beating their drums and gongs in the most approved fashion. Every one of them, man, woman and child, carries a long dry bamboo-stick. These bamboos are piled up in front of the temple, like soldiers' muskets, and set fire to at night, when the Holeyas dance round the flames until the pile breaks and falls to the ground. (If the pile fall towards the east, it is considered a lucky omen.) While these things take place outside, the temple-yard resounds with the voices of Coorgs, singing hymns in honor of Bhagavati, and the wild notes of many drums, through which the shrill words of the demoniac Coorg now and then pierce—a dismal scene!

On the seventh day, after the morning circumambulation of the temple, votive offerings are brought by the villagers of the parish. In each village the people collect at the house of some one, who has vowed a bullock-load of rice or cocoanuts, and take their breakfast. After breakfast, the whole company proceeds with the offering to the temple, singing and making music. The gift having been presented to the priest, the party returns to the village, to carry another contribution to the temple in the same manner. Thus the forenoon is spent. Then the young men dance for some hours. Music heightens the joy of the entertainments, and all the rest of the community, women, girls, children and old men, sit round the temple-yard—admiring spectators. At four o'clock the idol is taken out and carried round the shrine, the whole assembly joining in the procession. The Brahman-carrier of Bhagavati is possessed by the goddess. He stretches out his hand during the strange dance, which he performs with the idol upon his head. Whoever can, puts some money into his open hand. He, conscious enough in this respect, casts every

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



796 piece given to him into a copper vessel, held by the Tantri.
[782] With the setting sun the business of the day is concluded.

The morning of the eighth day is devoted to the delivery of votive presents, as on the preceding day. At ten o'clock
[535] dances are performed by the young men, as on the seventh day. This continues till two o'clock, when all the good shots
796 assemble for shooting at a mark. A cocoanut is hung up in
526 some tree between two plantain-bunch-tops as a mark. He who hits the nut, is rewarded with a present of three annas and the honor of the name of a good marksman. Then one of the Takkas, or the Coorg-dancer before Bhagavati, distributes a number of cocoanuts (of which there is an abundance, as every family must bring one or two) to the young men. One seizes a nut between his hands, others try to take it out of his grasp. In a few moments the whole ground is filled
796 with parties struggling for cocoanuts. He who succeeds in forcing the nut out of the hands of the original possessor,
[788] carries it away as his prize. At three o'clock the idol-procession takes place again, after which all the men go with the idol to the river or the tank, to bathe the goddess and themselves.

Ninth day. From each house one person appears at the temple, bearing the yearly money-contribution, which is deli-
[794] vered to the Takkas. The collection being made, the salaries of the temple-officers and servants of the temple are paid.
[574] Then the Brahmans give a good, undefiled dinner of pure vegetable dishes, to their Coorg supporters, first, of course, eating themselves, and leaving the rest to their friends. This temple dinner is the last act in the Bhagavati festival.

527 **d. The Keilmûrta festival.**

The Keilmûrta festival is a very different affair, altogether
[787] a Coorg business. Early in the month of Leo (July—August) the Takka of the gráma calls some respectable men to

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870)1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



accompany him to the house of the astrologer. They enquire of the wise man, what will be the most propitious day for the celebration of the Keilmúrta. By the sage's answer the day of joy for the village-youth is fixed. The hard labours of ploughing, sowing and rice-transplanting are over, there is a lull in the monsoon, and now and then a most lovely day spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and valleys, forests and fields of Coorg. The people have long been at labour in their fields and houses: a holiday is now most welcome. On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is collected in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When this is done, they are carried to some room or to the centre-place, the Nadumane, and there placed in a corner. They wait now for the muhúrta, the propitious time, assigned by the astrologer. At the right moment incense is burned before the weapons, sandalwood-paste is dotted upon them in profusion, and a show-offering of rice and other food (nevédya) is made to them, as to idols. As soon as this ceremony is over, a mat is placed before the weapons, and the whole house sits down to dinner. After the meal, the men take their arms and proceed to the Urumandu (village-green) to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark, and in athletic exercises. When the cocoanut has been hit, some of the company jump over a rope extended four or five feet from the ground. After this exercise, plantain-trees are fixed upon the ground, standing three deep. Now the strength of arms and the goodness of knives are tried. He who succeeds in cutting through three plantain-trees at one stroke, carries away the palm. Then round, heavy stones, placed on the Mandu for the purpose, are lifted and thrown, or put as in Scotland, over the head by such as are strong enough. The evening has now set in, and the company disperses. On the following morn-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



wife) is worshipped once a year, when pigs are sacrificed.— This is, of course, an abomination to the Brahmans.

b. **Ancestral and Demon worship.**

The principal place in Coorg-idolatry is held by the worship of the dead. Every family offers a sacrifice to its departed ancestors once a year, during the two months preceding the monsoon. A fowl, generally a cock, is killed, upon a stone devoted to the Káranas, somewhere in the jungle-land belonging to the family estate. (Kárana is the name given to the heads of families whether living or dead.) Seven of the Arméri houses, however, have little temples where *Kóla* or *Bárani* is annually performed. Kóla is the name of a sacrifice connected with demoniacal dancing, Bárani, of a sacrifice to the dead without the dances. These temples consecrated to the worship of the dead are called *Keimada*. Mada is the Coorg word for Matha, a religious building. The meaning of the word "kei" may possibly stand for Kárana, or simply denote: near, at hand, private. The Pújáris (officiating priests) employed in these ceremonies are Malayálas long since naturalized in Coorg, Panika, Maleya, Banna men, subordinate to the Kanyas, the hereditary Malayálam astrologers of Coorg. At the Kólas they beat drums and sing verses in commemoration of the ancestors. Those who are to be possessed by the spirits, wear masks and buckle on swords. As they sing of the deceased father, or grandfather, or other ancestor, his spirit seizes them and they speak as his mouthpieces. To each spirit a sacrifice is offered, a cock and a bottle of spirits, which his representative drinks, thus fortifying himself for future exertion during the night. The ceremony begins after sunset, in the presence of the whole village-community, and is continued until morning. About seven or eight o'clock in the morning pigs are sacrificed. The head of one of the pigs belongs to the performers, the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



the occasion a large concourse of people, chiefly Sivácháricas, collect round the tombs, to pay their respects; or, at any rate, to participate in the liberal charity, dispensed at the time from the Government Treasury.

The people of Coorg have also great faith in a certain *Kaliatanda Ponnappa* or simply *Kaliat-Achchappa*, the spirit of a Malayálam man, who came to Coorg, many generations ago, was naturalized, married a Coorg-woman, and established himself at Nálknád. He was a great magician, and long the dread of the Coorgs. At last he was shot near the Cutchéri of Nálknád taluq. Since his death his spirit has possessed men, who give themselves to the strange arts that he practised. A similar worship is still maintained in honor of Achannaik in Chickamunddúru in Kiggatnád.

Higher even than Kaliat-Achchappa, in the estimation of all Coorg, stands a certain female devil, at Kutta, called *Kuttadamma*. Kutta lies at the borders of the Wynád. Kuttadamma has no temple. The sanctuary is under a tree in the forest. The Pújári is a young man, the only person left of the family, which has engaged in this worship. Large sums of money are annually sent thither by people from all parts of Coorg. Many vows are paid to Kuttadamma in behalf of sick people or of the dead. And whether a sick person recover or die, the sum vowed for his recovery must be paid; or woe to the living! Liberal presents are also given to the man in charge of Kuttadamma, to engage her services against enemies, who, they say, are distressed or destroyed altogether by the demon, in answer to the prayers of her priest.

Each Báne (parcel of grass or forest-ground) has a presiding divinity, to which an annual sacrifice of pork and cakes is offered. If this sacrifice be not made, or not properly performed, the *Káddévaru* (the tending god, i. e. the god watching over the cattle) will withdraw his favour, and sickness and death among the cattle will ensue.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



and the poor wretch will rot away by degrees. To prevent such disasters, the Náta place is marked by a little stone enclosure. During the month of Scorpio (November—December) a lamp is lighted every evening to the Náta, and cocoanuts are offered as oblations.

### c. Astrology and Sorcery.

The ministers of Coorg superstition, the Kanyas, Panikas, Maleyas and Bannas make a handsome livelihood. The Kanyas find much work for the conjuring confraternity, dependent, in a great measure, upon their friendly patronage. The Kanya (astrologer) has complete mastery over the minds and, to a great extent, over the pockets of the credulous Coorgs. For a consideration in the shape of a purse of rupees, he writes the horoscope of the individuals who apply to him. Such is his cleverness, that he requires only to know the name of a person, in order to calculate the year, month, day and hour of his nativity. He is also the oracle of the Coorgs in cases of sorcery and witchcraft. It is believed by the Coorgs, that misfortunes, such as diseases of men or cattle, and deaths in the family or the herd, rarely come upon them in the natural order of things. The knowledge of an all-ruling Providence seems to have no place in their minds. Every severe affliction or great loss is ascribed to magic art or "an enemy hath done this." To find out the author of the mischief, and to induce or force him to keep the peace, is the only method that suggests itself to such people for obtaining deliverance from trouble. Application is made to some famous Kanya, who consults his books and caudies (little shells used for dice), and discovers the secret enemy's place, house, stature, age, etc. The man is called before a Panchâyat, and the case is discussed in the Parpatigára's Cutchéri. If things are not settled before this tribunal, the parties go to the Subadar, and frequently the quarrel is carried before the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



754 787 692 Superintendent, who has to get out of the difficulty as best he may. By the Panchâyat's self-constituted authority the wizard, or the person who has employed sorcery against his enemy, must promise to abstain in future; and in many cases reparation of some kind or other is made. In the days of the Rajahs such crimes were often punished with death. The British Government cannot, of course, follow the precedent. By a matter of fact order (No. 32 of 1858) from the Honorable Court of Directors to the Government of India: "Such "an offence as sorcery ought not to be recognised by any "British tribunal. If a pretended sorcerer is accused of "really injurious practices against the person or property of "any one, he shall be tried for these practices and if found "guilty punished accordingly and not for sorcery. The pre-"tended exercise of supernatural powers should be in itself "an offence and should be punished as a form of Fraud."

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### d. Substitutes for human sacrifices and other peculiar rites.

782 173 [176] As among other Dravidian mountain-tribes, so also in Coorg, tradition relates, that human sacrifices were offered in former times, to secure favour of their *Gráma-Dévatas: Máriamma*, *Durga* and *Bhadra-Káli*, the tutelary goddesses of the Sakti-line, who are supposed to protect the villages or nâds from all evil influences. In Kirindádu and Koninchéri-gráma in Katiednád, once in three years, in December and June, a human sacrifice used to be brought to Bhadra-Káli and during the offering by the Pánikas the people exclaimed "Alamma!" (álu-amma i. e. a man oh mother!) Once a devotee shouted: "Alallamma, ádu!" i. e. "not a man, oh mother, a goat," and since that time a he-goat without blemish has been sacrificed. Similarly in Bellúr in Távaligherri-múrnád of Kiggatnád-ta'uq once a year by turns from each house a man was sacrificed by cutting off his head at the temple; but

7/1 [Errata: This should read "The favour", see Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



itself the stronger, the narrower its local limits were confined, and the less it came into civilizing contact with surrounding nations. With the ascendancy of the Ikeri princes in Coorg, who spoke Canarese, this language became the written official medium and counteracted the Malayálam influence; but, however great the latter may have been through the intellectual superiority of the Malayálam people over the savage Coorg mountaineers, who dreaded their supposed supernatural powers, it never laid a beneficial hold on the Coorg mind by imparting the means of acquiring knowledge in the Malayálam tongue. It is true the horoscopes which the Kanyas wrote and still write for the Coorgs are in the Malayálam language, but they are unintelligible to the Coorgs. Thus it was left to the Coorg Rájahs of the Ikeri house to mould or rather to disfigure the Coorg mind into the character in which the English found it on their assumption of the Government in 1834; that it was of the most pitiable description, we have enough evidence to adduce: Lieut. Connor describes thus the condition of the people under Lingarája—and the picture applies equally well to the times of his predecessor and of the late Rájah—: "The chief of Codagu exercises an authority, that knows no restraint. He shares in common with the gods, the homage of the people and a more than ordinary portion of eastern humiliation is observed towards him; he is approached with a reverence due alone to the deity and addressed with all the servility fear could yield, or despotism claim; in his presence, in which no subject dare be seated or indeed within the precincts of his fort, the subject clasps his hands as in the act of prayer—the last sign of slavish vassalage—; and he is accosted in a language quite correspondent with this suppliant attitude; his subjects know no duty more imperious than attending to his mandates, which received with veneration are executed with singular precision, and his projects of whatever nature seconded without enquiry; nor would the